# Leading Change: Could a Joint OER Be the Catalyst of Army Transformation?

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War is both a physical reality and a state of mind. War is ambiguous, uncertain, and unfair. When we are at war, we must think and act differently. We become more flexible and more adaptable. We must anticipate the ultimate reality check—combat. We must win both the war and the peace. We must be prepared to question everything. What is best for the Nation? What must endure? What must change?

-Chief of Staff of the Army General Peter J. Schoomaker<sup>1</sup>

Because the Department of Defense (DOD) Reorganization (Goldwater-Nichols) Act of 1986 mandated the successful completion of a joint duty assignment as a prerequisite for promotion to general or flag officer, there have been discussions of the efficacy of a joint or DOD-wide officer evaluation system. While previous studies have recommended maintaining service-specific officer evaluation reports (OERs), these studies primarily considered using specific evaluation reports for officers assigned to joint duty billets.

The dynamics currently surrounding the Army's ongoing transformation, however, necessitate that it more thoroughly analyze the issue of change and culture. If culture is forestalling transformation, then the Army should focus on changing its culture by cultivating innovative officers who think critically and strategically. Using joint force capabilities and attributes from the Joint Operations Concepts (JOpsC), the Army could derive the characteristics of effective joint force officers, overcome impediments to a culture of innovation, and lead the other services in recognizing behaviors consistent with thinking jointly by developing and adopting a joint officer evaluation report.2

# Changing the Army's Culture

Brigadier General David A. Fastabend and Robert H. Simpson's article "Adapt or Die: The Imperative for a Culture of Innovation in the United States Army" is one of two documents Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) General Peter J. Schoomaker used to develop a game plan for advancing army objectives in fiscal year 2005 and beyond, a strategy to reemphasize officers' roles in leading change while managing complexity.<sup>3</sup> Fastabend and Simpson assert that for the Army to transform itself successfully, it must first cultivate a culture of innovation.

Changing the Army's culture, however, will require an indirect approach. In Leading Change, John P. Kotter, Professor of Leadership at Harvard Business School, says: "Culture is not something that you manipulate easily. Attempts to grab it and twist it into a new shape never work because you can't grab it. Culture changes only after you have successfully altered people's actions, after the new behavior produces some group benefit for a period of time."4

Fastabend and Simpson conclude: "Behavior drives culture. To change culture [the Army] must change behavior."5 Changing this OER to reward the new, desired joint behavior is one way the Army could accelerate and institutionalize the culture of innovation. Adopting a joint OER would demonstrate the Army's commitment to developing leaders who think critically and strategically; it would reward those who embrace and support the service's transformation to a campaign-quality Army with the joint and expeditionary capabilities required by the current and future geographic combatant commanders.

The Army uses OERs for several purposes: centralized selection and promotion boards, assignment and retention considerations, and professional development opportunities. Based on a rating chain composed of a hierarchy of supervisors, the Army designed the OER to measure duty performance, traits and characteristics, and potential for future service. Designed within the context of its command-oriented culture, the current Army OER emphasizes officer leadership abilities. The OER typically recognizes, and thus reinforces, the accomplishment of near-term objectives quantified by metrics rarely strategic in nature. Thus, the current OER is largely a record of tactical-level accomplishments often devoid of linkages to strategic vision, aims, or goals, and it

reinforces what Fastabend and Simpson refer to as "impediments to a culture of innovation."

# **Joint OER Impediments**

A joint OER must overcome five impediments to a culture of innovation before it can facilitate a change in behavior. The first impediment, responsibilities to obligations of the present, results in a risk-averse mentality that sacrifices the ability to fulfill future commitments in order to meet current obligations. The second impediment, the complexity of land warfare in the contemporary operating environment (COE), renders estimating second- and third-order effects of any one action extremely difficult. Many fear that innovative changes, if not properly integrated, could diminish the Army's current synergy of combined arms operations. The third impediment, internal

processes and structures that lend required order and routine when dealing with complexity, hampers innovation because the Army has optimized its traditional processes for control rather than change. The fourth impediment, the Army campaign mindset, relies on joint coordination and deconfliction rather

than joint interdependence. Joint concepts and doctrine came after the Army developed its concepts-based requirements, yet the Army has historically considered joint operations as joint support to an Army campaign. Finally, the "innovator's dilemma" obstructs fundamental changes in the organization at its perceived height of success, because doing something at the height of success is seemingly counterintuitive. A "Why mess with success?" mentality focuses on optimizing current capabilities to deal with today's potential crises instead of developing future capabilities to prepare for tomorrow's potential emergencies.

A joint OER could counteract most, if not all, of the impediments to the culture of innovation by reinforcing the desired behaviors Fastabend and Simpson outline in "Adapt or Die." They identify the following behaviors as in need of change: product, experimentation, joint, teaming, efficiency, parallel thinking, critical thinking, learning organization, doctrinal, and career. By addressing each of these behaviors with a long-term strategy, the authors assume that a new culture will emerge when each behavior becomes automatic

and implicit. In determining what officer attributes a joint OER should incorporate to institutionalize these behaviors, one could easily argue that the character, values, individual characteristics, performance traits, and leader attributes and skills necessary to be a successful officer vary little between services. This notwithstanding, each service designed its OER within the context of its respective culture, each with its own unique set of traditions, common experiences, and service-specific language.

If the Army's culture must change to become more joint, then the Army has founded its current OER in the very culture it now seeks to change. If joint success increasingly equates to equivalent successes for the services, joint culture will arguably come to replace large portions of individual service cultures. In the introduction to "Adapt or Die," Schoomaker says: "We

must have a campaign quality Army with a joint and expeditionary mindset. A fundamental underpinning of this mindset is a culture of innovation." Creating officers who inherently "think joint" is the crux of the desired culture of innovation, but the Army's realization that

officers in the future would require different attributes became apparent long before Schoomaker's tenure.

The Army's Officer Personnel Management System (OPMS) XXI Task Force completed its OPMS XXI Study in July 1997.9 From the discussions on operating in a joint environment, it was evident that the task force deemed joint duty and development to be an essential component of the Army's OPMS. Unfortunately, many of the Army's leaders apparently read this report too literally when they tied joint development solely to joint duty. In my opinion, the task force intended to say that joint duty and joint development were both essential components of the Army's OPMS. The following statement in the task force's final report supports this assumption and shows that some had already identified the need to change the Army's culture: "The Army officer must be able to talk to sister service counterparts, as well as to civilian agencies, to leverage maximum power. 'Joint' is not just a requirement—it is the way we fight. Accordingly, officer development must continue to recognize this need for 'interoperability' across Active/Guard/Reserve, joint, and interagency lines

and explore new ways of enhancing this cooperation and integration." <sup>10</sup>

### **Joint Vision 2020**

Because of the overwhelming number of adjustments needed to overhaul the Army's OPMS, little time remained to implement task force recommendations outside service-specific changes. Consequently, it was more than 3 years before the military began its next major push toward addressing the human dimension of joint transformation. Even when considering the changing military capabilities and the COE, many leaders believed that "officers of the future [would] require many of the same characteristics, leadership skills, and training and leader development needs of today."<sup>11</sup>

"Joint Vision 2020," first published in mid-2000 as the capstone strategic vision for the Armed Forces, provided initial insight into the type of officer the joint force would require to man what Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Henry H. Shelton termed

the "Total Force." Shelton called for "personnel of the highest quality and character who possess a multitude of skills; who are flexible, responsive, fully joint (intellectually, operationally,

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organizationally, doctrinally, and technically), committed to selfless service; who will confront a diversity of missions and technological demands that require adaptability, innovation, precise judgment, forward thinking, multicultural understanding; and who can create and take advantage of intellectual and technological advantage."<sup>13</sup>

Shelton based these officer attributes largely on his vision of a new concept of "jointness" that went beyond previous notions of warfighting with a combination of services—to the idea of warfighting with interdependent services: "The foundation of jointness is the strength of individual service competencies pulled together. Our objective in implementing the joint vision is the optimal integration of all joint forces and effects. To achieve that goal, the interdependence of the services requires mutual trust and reliance among all warfighters and a significantly improved level of interoperability especially in the areas of command and control and sustainment. This interdependence will ultimately result in a whole greater than the sum of its parts, and will contribute to achieving full-spectrum dominance through all forces acting in concert. The synergy

gained through the interdependence of the services makes clear that jointness is more than interoperability. The joint force requires capabilities that are beyond the simple combination of service capabilities, and joint experimentation is the process by which those capabilities will be achieved."<sup>14</sup>

Using "Joint Vision 2020" as an operational framework, Chief of Staff of the Army General Eric K. Shinseki began the process of transforming the Army. In "Concepts for the Objective Force," published a year after "Joint Vision 2020," Shinseki began to operationalize the capabilities needed for an objective force. <sup>15</sup> Making no mention of officer attributes that would facilitate such a transformation, he said: "The Army's transformation strategy must be harmonized with similar efforts of other services. Army transformation is grounded in the operational framework of joint doctrine and concepts and the concepts for future joint and combined operations. A joint team that is decisive in any type of operation against any level threat, in any environment, requires an Army that is strategically and operationally

responsive, rapidly deployable, mentally and physically agile, and able to transition rapidly across the spectrum of operations—a versatile force capable of dominating any situation or adversary with minimal organizational

adjustment and time. [The force] must be lethal in combat and able to generate overmatching combat power by leveraging the synergy of maneuver, firepower, protection, and leadership; empowered by dominant situational understanding resident in a vibrant information network. These operational capabilities will assure [the force's] greater survivability."<sup>16</sup>

Building on the "Joint Vision 2020" model, DOD's JOpsC reaffirmed that the future joint force must possess several core capabilities and attributes critical to success. While DOD couched these attributes as necessary for the joint force, the connotation was that future joint force officers must also possess and exhibit greater professional talents. To facilitate a change within the Army's culture into something inherently joint, a joint OER used as part of the Army's officer evaluation reporting system must delineate and reward consistent demonstration of officer attributes that support joint force capabilities and attributes. Developing a joint OER that would reward officers who demonstrate an ability to lead a force laden with joint capabilities would enable the Army to stimulate a change to the

behaviors that a campaign-quality Army with a joint and expeditionary mindset needs.

# **JOpsC Core Capabilities**

Because there are no clearly defined joint force officer attributes, joint OERs must assess and evaluate the skills and attributes officers need to achieve core capabilities.<sup>17</sup> In doing so, joint OERs could mitigate the negative effects of the impediments to a culture of innovation by immersing officers in a culture focused on developing joint interdependence. The JOpsC lists the following eight broad core capabilities the joint force must possess in order to organize, plan, prepare, and operate throughout the range of military operations (ROMO):

• Achieve common understanding of all dimensions of the battlespace throughout the joint force. Robust intelligence architectures can help identify adversary capabilities or other likely contingencies. Establishing relationships and regional understanding by engaging in theater security cooperation activities with other nations

enhances the joint force's situational understanding. An effects-based approach that includes systems visualization develops a shared understanding of casual relationships and provides critical tools that help commanders and staffs plan, execute, assess, and adapt. Situational understanding of the essential political, military, economic, social,

infrastructure, and information systems within an area of interest will no longer be the province of the military strategist and will be a characteristic of the most effective joint force officers.

- Make joint decisions and take action throughout the joint force faster than the opponent. Seizing and maintaining the initiative ensures freedom of action and is the result of close coordination with allies and partners. Leveraging decision superiority and rapidly employable joint capabilities leads to desired end states. Facilitating timely employment of appropriate joint capabilities to shape the overall security environment to meet global priorities requires coordination with all other instruments of national power and multinational partners. In the future, unilateral thinking focused on solving Army tactical problems will rarely be sufficient to accomplish strategic objectives.
- •Adapt in scope, scale, and method, as the situation requires. Many military missions, such as nonhostile domestic events and most humanitarian assistance

operations, require the joint force to support civil authorities in accomplishing global priorities. Missions against asymmetric adversaries require adaptive approaches and continuous assessments of adversary systems to quickly and effectively exploit or mitigate vulnerabilities. Forces that have established habitual relationships with elements of joint, multinational, and interagency capabilities have been tailored for a flexible array of capabilities across the ROMO. They offer the capacity to commit to a specific operation while remaining ready to shift to another. Employing forces independently or interdependently requires a higher caliber joint force officer—one who is effective in a strategic context.

• Rapidly deploy selected portions of the joint force that can immediately transition to execution, even in the absence of developed infrastructure. To make full use of the rapid employment capabilities inherent in expeditionary forces, efforts must be coordinated with all other instruments of national power. Shaping the battlespace, setting initial conditions to

achieve strategic objectives, providing assured access, and establishing the required infrastructure to facilitate the introduction of followon joint forces will require officers with mental agility uncharacteristic of previous generations. The Army must identify forward-thinking and responsive joint force officers who have the ability to comprehend complex and

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diverse missions in the COE.

- Create and sustain continuous pressure throughout the battlespace for as long as it takes to accomplish strategic or operational aims. Exerting immediate and continuous pressure on an adversary through the dynamic employment of maneuver forces, precision strike weapons, and nonlethal information operations limits an adversary's options and presents him with challenging dilemmas. When rapidly decisive operations are not practical or achievable, joint forces must be able to engage in steady, protracted operations. Joint force officers confronted with less than optimal tactical situations will be required to think long term and possess a multicultural understanding of strategic settings.
- Disorient, dislocate, disintegrate, or destroy any opponent with a combination of lethal and nonlethal means. Identifying and exploiting critical relationships, dependencies, vulnerabilities, and strengths of an adversary's systems will be integral to joint operational

planning. Joint force officers must understand effectsbased approaches and how to leverage all instruments of national power to produce specific effects that disrupt the adversary's decisionmaking process, alter his intent, diminish his capabilities, and force him to comply with demands. The most effective joint force officers will be those who are flexible and innovative enough to exploit advantages offered by thinking in a thoroughly joint manner, the hallmark of the next generation of strategically cognizant leaders.

• Conduct deployment and sustainment activities in support of multiple, simultaneous, distributed, and decentralized battles and campaigns. Officers will soon be required to conduct and support several distributed nonlinear operations in a singular battlespace, unified by a common purpose and intent. A multidirectional, multidimensional operation directed against an adversary who has dispersed critical vulnerabilities will create unpredictability in the application of combat

power to overwhelm one's adversary. A distributed force created by integrating joint capabilities at increasingly lower echelons and maneuvering at an increased tempo will require enhanced

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connectivity among all elements. Full integration, global synchronization, and agile sustainment of multiple, distributed, and decentralized forces will require a sustainment system that is precise, flexible, and responsive to a dynamic environment. Army officers in this networked battlespace can ill afford to be experts in only their branch or service. Effective joint force officers must understand how to leverage multifunctional and joint logistics to support expeditionary maneuver forces.

• Accomplish all of the above in an interagency and multinational context. The Army is only one piece of the puzzle necessary to achieve full-spectrum dominance, which requires complete, comprehensive coordination among interagency and multinational partners, as well as being able to leverage the other military services' capabilities. Achieving a desired end state and strategic objectives necessitates an integrated, networked joint force and interoperability with interagency and multinational partners. Officers who can only "think Army" will be of little value in the complex COE, which requires an increased capacity for critical thinking skills and strategic forethought.

### **Joint Force Attributes**

Using a joint OER to reinforce officer skills needed to achieve joint force attributes could further mitigate the negative effects of the culture of innovation and could lead the other services in recognizing behaviors consistent with thinking jointly. In addition to incorporating the skills necessary to realize the core capabilities, a joint OER must also reflect the skills needed to optimize the following joint force attributes. <sup>18</sup> The joint force officer should be able to—

• Fully integrate all elements to achieve unified purpose. To be successful in the future joint force, officers must advance beyond the concept of deconfliction and fully integrate their elements with all other functions and capabilities to achieve a unified purpose. Where practical, the services should modify existing equipment and systems to facilitate joint interoperability until replacement items developed with the joint team mindset are available. Coupled with effective

joint training, these interoperable systems would enhance integration and virtually eliminate the seams between functional components. Full integration in the strategic, operational, and tactical domains would provide joint force commanders

with an inherently interoperable, synergistic joint capability.

- Network all elements to achieve greater information dominance. A joint force officer, linked and synchronized in time and purpose, must capitalize on information dominance and near-simultaneous diffusion, and turn information into actions faster than his adversary. Allowing dispersed forces to more efficiently communicate, maneuver, share common operating pictures, and achieve desired end states increases the joint force's operational effectiveness. Networking also allows greater reachback and the ability to extend beyond organic capabilities, including fire support; sustainment; information from interagency, multinational partners; and academic or industrial sources. Assimilating intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, other information, and total asset visibility into an integrated picture will produce fully networked forces better able to conduct distributed operations.
- Decentralize command to allow officers at lower echelons to operate in a joint manner. Collaborative planning and shared knowledge empower subordinates

to make decisions and take action autonomously, compress decision cycles, seize the initiative, and exploit fleeting opportunities while distributed across a noncontiguous battlespace. However, empowerment vis-à-vis unique situational understanding is dependent on officers possessing a clear understanding of strategic objectives and commander's intent.

- Adapt quickly to contingencies. Being able to respond quickly to any contingency with the appropriate capabilities mix requires joint force officers who can optimally use forces that are multipurpose, tailorable, scalable, and agile. As determined by mission requirements, the joint force must be able to apply essential capabilities by fine-tuning them in a multiuse manner, without sacrificing significant operational capability.
- Sustain decision superiority. To sustain decision superiority, future joint force officers must gain and then maintain information superiority. Once the joint force obtains information superiority, joint force officers can implement decisions faster than adversaries can react, thereby taking the initiative instead of reacting to the adversary's actions. In operations other than war, decision superiority creates an operational tempo that allows the force to shape the situation, or react to changes, and accomplish its mission.
- Foster lethality. The increased and refined kinetic and nonkinetic joint force capability to destroy an adversary's systems in any condition and in all environments will give future joint force officers unparalleled power. This power comes from leveraging technological advances with greater precision and more devastating target effects during close combat or at longer ranges. Doing so requires judicious use of technology by joint force officers who can assess second- and third-order effects within strategic constructs.

# **Progress Toward Jointness**

In a 1993 executive research project, Lieutenant Colonel William M. Smith noted that he could find nothing in any joint publication that delineated joint attributes. He rashly concluded that "[n]o compelling reason based solely on 'joint attributes' justifies the creation of a joint evaluation system." Smith further says that "[t]he continued use of the service evaluation systems within their [respective service] cultures and in the joint arena had not hindered the successful move toward 'jointness." Don M. Snider has a more insightful view of the services' progress toward

jointness since 1986: "Such a management approach, hoping as it does to establish jointness by the cultural interpenetration gained from brief educational and joint duty assignments, will accomplish no more in the future than it has in the past 16 years." While Smith notes that "[o]fficers who have been successful in their service bring those skills and talents to the joint arena and continue to serve successfully," the fundamental issue is no longer about service in joint billets—it is about transforming to develop officer behaviors necessary to lead a campaign-quality Army with a joint and expeditionary mindset.<sup>22</sup>

Thinking joint is a behavior, and Snider offers a powerful argument pointing to one possible weakness in DOD's current strategy of transformation: "Military institutions do not transform, people do; and in so doing, they transform the institution."23 Quite possibly, the Army's center of gravity with regard to transformation is its people—not its capabilities. If this is true, then the Army's current strategy of transformation is consistent with a failing Snider identified in "Jointness, Defense Transformation, and the Need for a New Joint Warfare Profession": "Other than directing a review of joint education, there is no transformational guidance whatsoever for the human development of military and civilian professionals within the joint warfare community."24 While citing one survey of officers at the Armed Forces Staff College who strongly disapproved of a joint OER, the authors of "The Joint Evaluation Report: Career Enhancer or Kiss of Death?" also note that "[w]ith more service interoperability, however, the idea may gain acceptance."25 Since that 1998 survey, and in light of the necessary post-9/11 increases in unity of military efforts, younger officers throughout DOD have come to understand fully the capabilities inherent in "fighting joint."

The way forward is obvious: We need a joint OER to energize a change in Army culture and to demonstrate and codify the commitment to develop leaders who think critically and strategically and to reward those who exemplify the joint and expeditionary mindset. The Army must take advantage of this window of opportunity to lead the other services in rewarding behaviors associated with thinking jointly and strategically.

To best adopt a culture of innovation and overcome impediments to change, the Army should derive joint force officer traits after analyzing joint force capabilities and attributes. There is no better time than the present to implement a joint OER to reward joint

behaviors and reinforce deeds consistent with a culture of innovation. In this endeavor, the Army must not fail. The Army's success demands that it anticipate, shape, and create its future. A joint OER will ensure that the best organizational and strategic leaders usher the Army into the purple future. MR

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